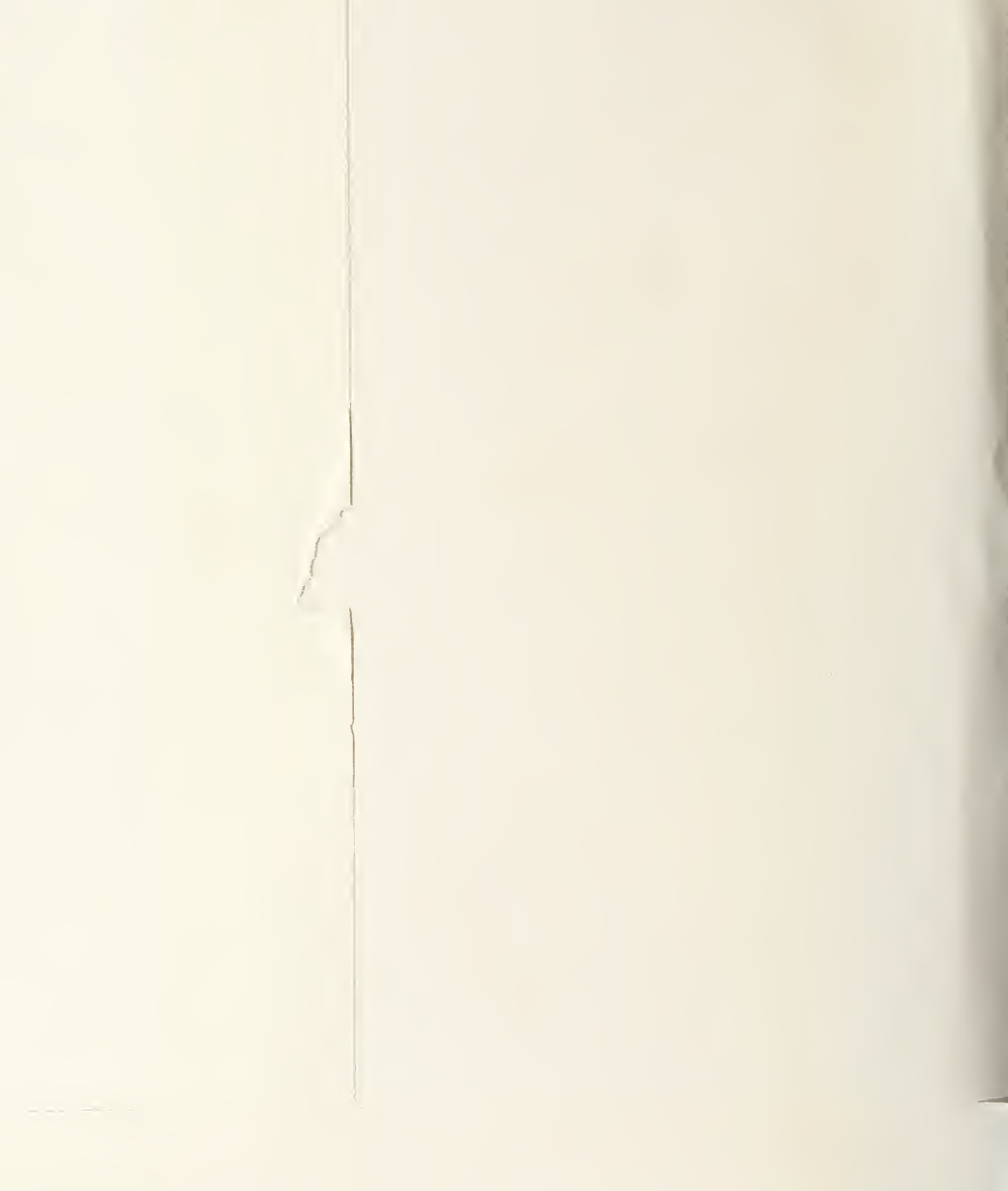


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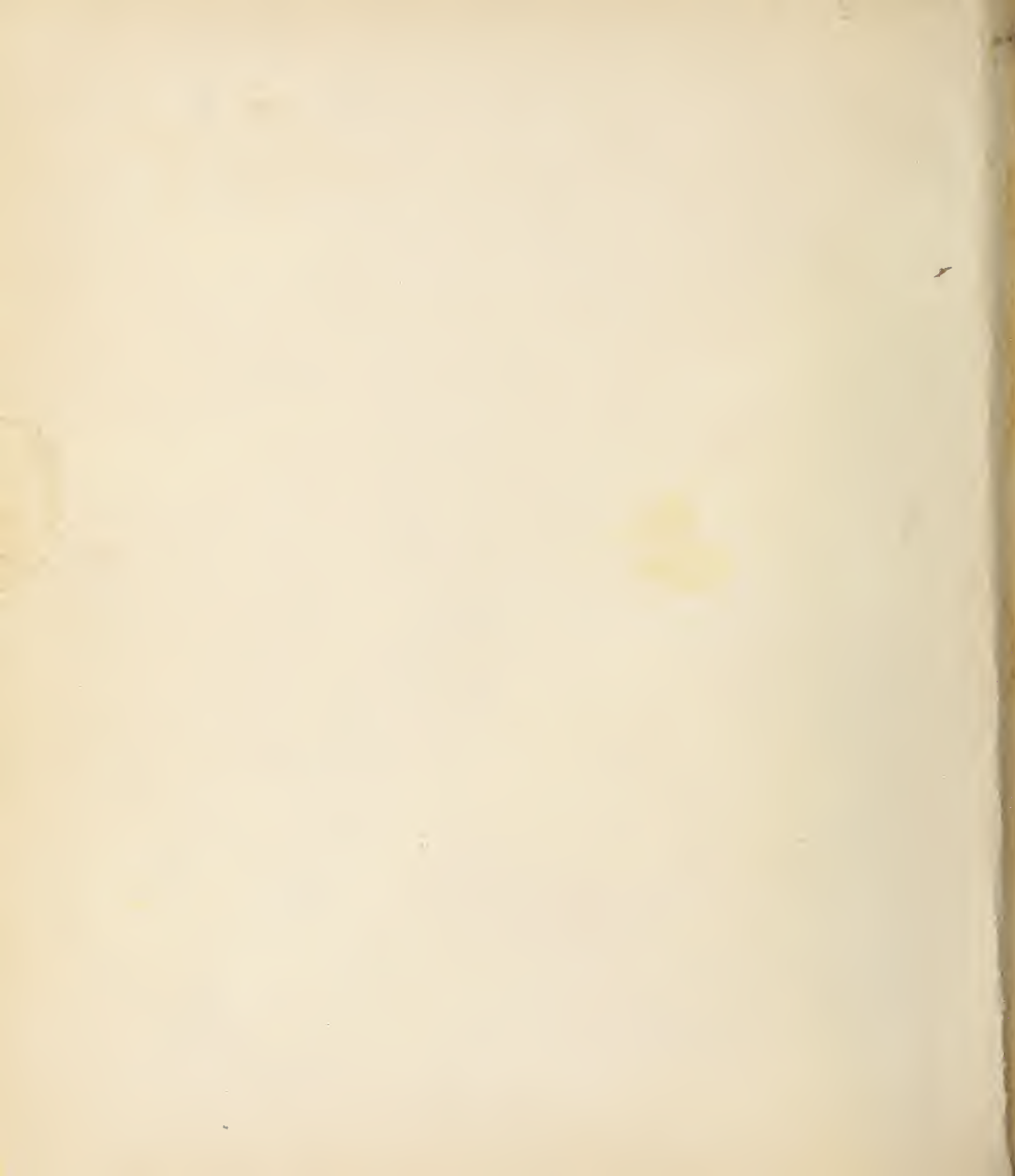
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The Song of Songs



MILTON S. TERRY.



The Song of Songs

An Inspired Melodrama

Analyzed, Translated, and Explained

By

MILTON S. TERRY

Professor in Garrett Biblical Institute



Cincinnati: Cranston and Curtis

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O, strong as Death is Love!
Inexorable as Hell is Jealousy;
Its flames are flames of fire,
The flashing flames of Jah.
Many waters can not quench the passion of Love,
Nor can rivers overwhelm it.
If a man would give all the substance of his house
for Love,
They would utterly despise him.

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles and by the hinds of the field,
That ye awaken not nor rouse up
The passion of Love until it please!

The Song of Songs.

(1. UNDER this title we find in the Hebrew Scriptures a most exquisite poem, the obvious purpose of which is to celebrate the passion of human love.) The author was familiar with the Holy Land, from the tents of Kedar to the heights of Lebanon. He mentions Carmel, and Sharon, and Amanah, and Shenir, and Hermon, and Damascus, and Gilead, and Baal-hamon, and Heshbon, and Bath-rabbim, and En-gedi, and Jerusalem, and Tirzah, and Tarshish. He exhibits the keenest delight in rural landscapes and the life of shepherds, and speaks of water-courses, and gardens, and vineyards, and trees, and lilies, and flowers; of goats that gambol on the hillside, and gazelles that leap on the mountains, and doves that hide in the nooks of the rocks.

(2. Some have been troubled with the presence of this book in the sacred canon, and, without doubt, the defects

of our common English version have had much to do in creating prejudice against it. The translators have introduced indelicate allusions where the original text calls for no such rendering. There is not, from beginning to end of this beautiful drama, a sentiment that can be justly condemned as offensive to good taste.

3. But many and various are the interpretations that have been put upon the poetic language of the drama. (1) The old allegorical theory makes it a portraiture of the love existing between God and his people, or of Christ and his Church. (2) Closely allied to this is the semi-allegorical, or symbolical interpretation, which resolves the song into a parable of Christ and his beloved bride, the Church. (3) According to others the song celebrates the marriage of Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings iii, 1), while it may also have an allegorical application to Christ and the Church. (4) Another opinion is, that the bride is not Pharaoh's daughter, but some otherwise unknown maiden of northern Palestine, whom Solomon loved, and brought from her country home to be a favored one among the seven hundred wives mentioned in 1 Kings xi, 3. And yet (5) another view, and the one adopted in the following

exposition, is, that the heroine of this poetic drama is to be understood as a fair young maiden of northern Palestine, whom king Solomon is supposed to have sought in vain to win. She resists all his blandishments, rejects all his offers, and remains true to her shepherd lover, to whom she is at last restored.

4. The title says it is a "Song of Songs which is to *Solomon*." This may mean either that it belongs to Solomon as its author, or that it has reference to Solomon as its subject. The contents of the Song, as analyzed and explained in the following pages, are incompatible with the view that Solomon was the author. The poet appears to have no friendly feeling towards that monarch, but the scope of the drama is to condemn his attempt to win the affection of one who protests that her love is elsewhere. She insists that she is not at home in the king's chambers. Her lover is one who feeds his flock among the lilies, and frequents the gardens and the vineyards. She tells the king that, so far from finding delight in his sumptuous halls, she is herself "a wild-flower of Sharon, a lily of the valleys." She longs for the shady greensward, where the scattered cedars and cypress-trees formed the beams and

panels of a living forest-temple over her beloved and herself. Nay, more, her beloved is himself "like an apple-tree among the trees of the forest." In view of these and many other similar assertions, the most probable supposition is that the author of our Song was some poet of the northern kingdom of Israel, who lived and wrote after the secession of the ten tribes, and perhaps while the capital was yet at Tirzah. (Compare chapter vi, 4, with 1 Kings xiv, 17; xvi, 6, 8, 15, 23.) As a woman is the heroine, it is not very improbable that the author was a woman. Who more fitting than a gifted female poet, like the prophetess who dwelt of old under the palm-tree in the mountains of Ephraim (Judges iv, 5), to celebrate in a sacred drama the pure, unwavering loves of a woman's heart! As the Book of Job exhibits in poetic form the trials and triumph of a true man, so the Song of Songs extols the virtue and unchangeable affection of a true woman, when put to the severest test.

5. The heroine is called in chapter vi, 13, THE SHULAM-MITE (Hebrew, *Shulamith*, or Shulammitess.) This name may have been suggested to the poet by the story of the fair damsel, Abishag the *Shunammite*, who was sought out

and brought to David in his old age. (1 Kings i, 3, 4, 15; ii, 17.) But the drama, being essentially a work of art, need not be supposed to record facts of history. The author may have chosen the word *Shulammite* on purpose to recall the memory of the Shunammite maiden, and to show that such attempts to allure fair young women of Israel into the royal palace was no unheard-of event. Solomon's harem probably contained many a damsel, who, like the Shunammite Abishag, had been "sought for throughout all the coasts of Israel." This fact gave sufficient ground for a poet to construct the ideal of this Song of Songs, and to celebrate the passion of love in its pure protest against all attempts to force it into unnatural and unhallowed action.

6. The chief difficulty in the interpretation of this poem is found in the fact that the several persons of the drama (*dramatis personæ*) are not formally supplied by the author. We are thus shut up to the necessity of supplying these by means of a critical study and analysis of the language of the author. Think of reading one of Shakespeare's great plays without any list of the persons represented, or any clew except that which the language and sentiments supply! But

such is our position when we come to the study of this Song of Songs. We must determine, at each line, who the speaker is, and what the situation. Under such limitation it is evident that, in some passages, no interpreter can be absolutely certain as to the exact situation, or the person speaking, so that in such cases several different explanations are possible.

7. The thrice repeated adjuration, which is found in chapters ii, 7; iii, 5; and viii, 4; and which seems to conclude each of the first three acts of the drama, furnishes an important help to the true interpretation. Three times over the Shulammitte cries out:

"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles and by the hinds of the field,
That ye awaken not nor rouse up
The passion of love until it please."

The common version of this impassioned appeal misses the real thought of the writer. It is not the silly notion that the speaker fears that the women of Jerusalem will wake up her lover before *he pleases* to awake, but rather a solemn protest against their attempt to arouse in her a love for Solomon, when the burning passion of her heart

is centered on her own shepherd-lover. This doctrine of the inviolableness of true love is expressed still more emphatically near the close of the poem:

“For strong as death is love;
Inexorable as hell is jealousy:
Its flames are flames of fire,
The flashing flames of JAH.
Many waters can not quench the passion of love,
And rivers can not overwhelm it.
If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
They would utterly despise him.”

—CHAPTER viii, 6, 7.

8. A further clew to the true interpretation is found in chapter vi, 11, 12, where Shulamith says:

“Unto the nut-garden I went down,
To see the greens of the valley,
To see whether the vines were in blossom,
Whether the pomegranates had bloomed.
I know not (how) my soul set me
Into the chariots of Amminadib.”

The most obvious meaning of this language is that, when she was out in the fields one day, she was suddenly taken, she hardly knows how, into a chariot, and carried

away from the gardens and vineyards she had been wont to keep. She seems to have been captured in some unthought-of manner, dazed and bewildered, so as to lose her self-possession, and in this half-conscious condition she makes her first appearance in the opening scene of the drama.

9. Not only in the opening scene, but throughout the poem, the utterances of the Shulammitte show her to be passionately in love. This fact she makes no secret, but rather shows every possible effort to have it clearly known. It is the first confession of her lips as she comes to herself in the chariot in which she has been taken, and it is made known in a great variety of expressions during the progress of the drama. Her thoughts are with her heart, and that is far away with her lover—where the flocks repose, where the vineyards bloom, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard. Such love is a holy passion, and worthy to be extolled in the volume of divine inspiration. Wherever it exists in its charming purity and power, it truly represents the blessed relation existing between God and his people, or between Christ and his Church.

10. With this brief introduction to the Song, and in

accordance with this theory of its plan and purpose, we furnish in the following pages a new translation and analysis, accompanied by such expository foot-notes as may be needed or desired by the reader. The division of the drama into four acts accords with the contents and character of the subject-matter. As the first scene is very short, but all-sufficient to place the subject vividly before us, so the last act, consisting of but one scene, is correspondingly short, but ample for exhibiting the happy triumph of the maiden. In the third act, however, Solomon and his women make the most prolonged and persistent effort to overcome the will of Shulammith, and that act consists of three scenes, and is accordingly the longest section of the drama.

The critical reader of our translation will observe at several places our disregard of the Masoretic pointing. That system was introduced when the true meaning of the Song was not understood, and pronominal suffixes are in several instances pointed as masculine where they are obviously feminine. Even in the text of the adjuration addressed directly to women (ii, 7; iii, 5; viii, 4), the suffixes are masculine.

The Song of Songs.

Dramatis Personæ.

Solomon, the king.

Officers and Attendants of the King.

Citizens of Jerusalem.

Women of Jerusalem, belonging to the harem of Solomon.

A Charioteer (Amminadib?).

Shulammith, a beautiful young maiden of Northern Palestine.

Brothers of Shulammith (probably half-brothers).

The Lover of Shulammith, a young shepherd of Northern Palestine.

The
Drama of the Song of Songs.

ACT I. CHAPTER I, 2—II, 7.

First Scene. I, 2—4 a.

[Shulammoth appears in a chariot, driven by the royal charioteer. She is surrounded by a company of court ladies from Solomon's harem, and is just awaking from the stupor in which she was taken into the chariot (compare chapter vi, 12). She murmurs in her waking consciousness, not yet realizing her situation as a captive, while the women bend forward, eager to catch the first words that escape her lips, and anxious to make her feel at home among them. The scene is a short one, as must needs be in a moving chariot; but it is sufficient to introduce the subject.]

SHULAMMITH.

2. Let him kiss me from kisses of his mouth.

2. *From kisses.*—In a partitive sense, as if the thought were: one or more of the many kisses he may give. *Thy loves.*—Caresses and other like manifestations of affection.

WOMEN OF JERUSALEM.

For better are thy loves than wine.

3. In fragrance thy ointments are good;
As ointment shall thy name be poured out;
Therefore maidens love thee.

SHULAMMITH.

[Now first fully waking to realize her situation, is seized with an impulse to flee away and escape, and she cries out to the charioteer in front of her:]

4. Draw me after thee! Let us run!

[*Exeunt.*]

Second Scene. I, 4—II, 7.

[One of the apartments for women in a country residence of the king, where it has been arranged for him first to meet Shulammith. She and the women of Jerusalem are at first alone together.]

SHULAMMITH.

4. The king has brought me into his chambers!

WOMEN OF JERUSALEM.

We will greatly exult and rejoice in thee,
We will celebrate thy loves more than wine;
Rightly have they loved thee.

SHULAMMITH.

5. Dark am I, and comely,
O daughters of Jerusalem!

WOMEN OF JERUSALEM [interrupting].

Like the tents of Kedar,
Like the curtains of Solomon.

SHULAMMITH.

6. O do not keep looking at me because I am
 swarthy,
Because the sun has scorched me;
The sons of my mother were angry with me;

They made me keeper of the vineyards;
My vineyard, which was mine, I have not
kept.

7. O tell me, thou, whom my soul loveth,
Where dost thou feed, where dost thou rest
at noon?

Ah! why should I be like a woman veiled,
Beside the flocks of thy companions?

6. *Made me keeper of vineyards.*—The absurdity of such a statement in the mouth of a princess like the daughter of Pharaoh is apparent. But such service for a country maiden is more natural, and in keeping with the probable rigor of brothers who talk about her in the tone and style of chapter viii, 8, 9. *My vineyard.*—Here she doubtless uses the word *vineyard* in some tropical sense. It is not some vineyard like that which her brothers set her to guard, and which belonged to her as a legal portion of the paternal estate. Both here and at chapter viii, 12, she seems rather to refer to her own person, not excepting her freedom, her home, and the familiar scenes of her childhood and early life. These she sees, at the close of the drama, restored to her again.

7. *Woman veiled.*—Like one of lost virtue. Compare Genesis xxxviii, 14, 15.

ONE OF THE WOMEN.

[Impatient that a country girl should prefer the associations of shepherd life to those of royalty, and speaking by way of contemptuous rebuke and sarcasm.]

8. If thou know not for thyself, thou beauty
among women,
Go forth for thyself at the heels of the flock,
And feed thy kids by the lodges of the shepherds.

[*Enter* KING SOLOMON.]

SOLOMON.

9. To my mare in the chariots of Pharaoh
Have I been comparing thee, my consort.
10. Comely are thy cheeks in the chains,—
Thy neck in the strings of pearls.

THE WOMEN.

11. Chains of gold we will make for thee,
Together with studs of silver.

SHULAMMITH [shrinking away].

12. Until the king was among its surroundings,
My nard gave out its fragrance.
13. A bag of myrrh is my love to me,
Upon my bosom it shall still remain.
14. A bunch of cypress flowers is my love to me,
Among the vineyards of En-gedi.

SOLOMON.

15. Behold, thou art beautiful, my consort;
Behold, thou art beautiful, thy eyes are doves.

12. The language of this verse implies that Shulammith is annoyed by the king's presence. Until he came in, such charms as she possessed exerted their natural attractions, but have no response at his approach.

13. *Bag of myrrh is MY love.*—Emphasis on MY. Her love is not the king, but an absent friend, whose memory, like a bundle of myrrh or a bouquet of delightful flowers, she will keep day and night upon her bosom as a token of her heart's affection. The mention of *En-gedi* is designed to enhance the idea of the richness of flowers growing in a clime so tropical.

SHULLAMMITH.

[Speaking as to one far away.]

16. Behold, thou art beautiful, my love,
Aye, and delightful,
Aye, and our bed is a fresh green.
17. The beams of our house are cedars,
Our panels are cypress trees.
- II, 1. I am a wild flower of Sharon,
A lily of the valleys.
-

16. *Our bed a fresh green.*—Reference to the shady greensward, on which she and her lover had been accustomed to repose and converse. Like all the imagery which follows, it contains a delicate reminder that she loves the fields and the woods, not the attractions of king's houses.

17. *Cedars, cypress trees.*—Note in this verse the imagery of an open forest, a house of nature's own formation, in which siding and roof consist of the living trees.

II, 1. *Wild flower.*—And so at home in the open fields, in valley, or hillside, but not in the hothouse. By these strong metaphors she would fain have all who hear her understand that she is no product of the court of kings, but longs rather for her country home.

SOLOMON.

2. As a lily among the thorns,
So is my consort among the daughters.

SHULAMMITH.

3. As an apple-tree among the trees of the forest,
So is my love among the sons ;
In its shade I delighted and sat down,
And its fruit was sweet to my palate.
4. He brought me to the house of wine,
And his banner over me was love.

2. *Lily among thorns*.—If a lily, he would say, all other growths around you are as thorns. Compare also vi, 8, 9.

3. *Apple-tree . . . forest*.—She thus shows consummate ability to meet the king with telling repartee. Those interpreters who, like Delitzsch and Zöckler, regard this conversation between Solomon and Shulammoth as the language of two lovers flattering each other to the face, seem to me to miss the real delicacy which the high genius and art of the poem everywhere display. Such words of glowing admiration have great force when spoken of an absent lover, but would be fulsome in direct address. Moreover, the perfect tense in her words, "*I delighted and sat down*," points most naturally to past enjoyments.

[At this point, the vivid remembrance of past joys overwhelms her, and she bursts out in a wild emotion, as she utters the following impassioned strain, with which this first act closes.]

5. O stay me with comfits, refresh me with apples,
For I am sick with love.
6. His left hand shall be underneath my head,
And his right hand shall embrace me.
7. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
That ye awaken not nor rouse up the passion
of love until it please !

[*Exeunt.*]

6. The sentiment of this verse is equivalent to "He is the only one who shall ever embrace me with a lover's freedom."

7. *The passion of love.*—This form of expression is required to bring out in English the force of the Hebrew word, preceded, as here, not only by the definite article, but also the demonstrative particle.

ACT II. CHAPTER II, 8—III, 5.

First Scene. II, 8-17.

[A soliloquy of Shulammith while alone in her chamber. Her heart and thoughts are with her absent lover; her lively imagination brings him near, and she seems to hear his voice as at former times, and sings to herself the following song.]

SHULAMMITH.

8. Hark ! The voice of my love!

Lo, there he comes,

Leaping over the mountains,

Bounding over the hills !

9. How like a gazelle is my love,

Or a fawn of the hinds !

8. *The voice of my love.*—This love-song, like many another, is the natural expression of an instinct implanted in the human heart. The woman's desire is toward the man, as declared in Genesis iii, 16; but it is also true that his desire is upon her, as stated in this Song, chapter vii, 10.

Lo, there he stands behind our wall,
Looking in from the windows,
Glancing round from the lattice!

10. My love answered and said to me,
 "Rise up, my consort, my fair one, and walk
 forth for thine own sake.
11. For lo, the winter is over,
 The rain has passed by, it has gone,
12. The flowers have appeared in the land,
 The time of song has come,
 And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in
 our land.
13. The fig-tree has spiced its winter-green figs,
 And the vines are abloom, they give out
 fragrance.

12. *Time of song*.—The glad songs of spring-time.

13. *Winter-green figs*.—A kind which grows in sheltered places during the winter season, and ripens in the spring.

Rise up, walk forth, my consort, my fair one,
yea, walk forth for thine own sake.

14. My dove in the nooks of the rock, in the
covert of the bluff,

Let me see thy form, let me hear thy voice,
For thy voice is charming and thy form is
comely."

[At this point she changes her tone, and trills a few lines of a familiar ditty she has been wont to sing for the entertainment of her lover among the blooming vineyards.]

15. *Catch ye for us the foxes,
Little foxes damaging to vineyards,
And our vineyards are abloom.*

[After a pause she changes, and sings the following fragment of another song familiar to her lover.]

16. *My love is mine and I am his,
Who feeds among the lilies.*

17. *Until the day breathes cool,
And the shadows flee,
Turn, be for thine own sake, my love,
Like a gazelle or a fawn of the hinds,
On the mountains of Bether.*

[Exit.]

17. *Shadows flee*.—Poetical concept of the lengthening shadows, when they stretch away longer and longer, as if departing with the setting sun. Compare Psalm cii, 11; cix, 23; Job xiv, 2. *Bether*.—If this word were designed as an adjective-genitive (as Septuagint, "mountain of clefts"), we should have had the plural form, as we have of the word for *spices* in chapter viii, 14. The plural does occur in Jeremiah xxxiv, 18, 19. Compare also Genesis xv, 10. But the singular, as occurring here, is best understood as the name of some mountainous region; perhaps a poetical name for Bithron beyond the Jordan. See 2 Samuel ii, 29.

Zöckler strangely writes: "The adherents of the shepherd hypothesis are not able to explain why the description in chapter ii, 8-17, presupposes an undoubted country scene, with mountains, hills, vineyards, and flowery fields; or why it is a simple monologue, and neither Solomon nor the daughters of Jerusalem utter a word." On the contrary, we believe this shepherd hypothesis, as exhibited in the foregoing analysis, is the only one which gives a natural meaning to the words. It is indeed a monologue, consisting of a series of fragmentary utterances and songs, such as a captive maiden, yearning for her country home and lover, might be supposed to speak.

Second Scene. III, 1-5.

[Scene in the same apartment as before, on another day, when the women are present. Shulammith rehearses before them a recent dream, and makes another appeal to them not to try further to arouse in her the passion of love for another than the one for whom her soul has a pure affection.]

III, 1. On my couch in the night-watches,

I sought the one my soul loveth ;

I sought him, but I did not find him.

2. "Let me rise, now, (I said,) and go about in
the city,

In the streets and in the broad, open places,
I will seek him whom my soul loveth."

I sought him, but I did not find him.

3. They found me—the watchmen who go round
in the city ;

"Him whom my soul loveth have ye seen?"
(I asked;)

4. Scarcely had I passed away from them,
When I found him whom my soul loveth;
I caught him, and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him to the house of my
mother,
And to the chamber of her that conceived me.
5. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field,
That ye awaken not nor rouse up the passion
of love until it please.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III. CHAPTER III, 6-VIII, 4.

First Scene. III, 6-II.

[Scene near the entrance into Jerusalem. Shulam-mith is carried in a royal palanquin, and, in company with the women of Jerusalem, is guarded by a strong force of warriors. They are bringing her to the city and palace of Solomon, where the king is awaiting her arrival. He is arrayed in his royal robes, wears a crown, and is surrounded by some of his chief courtiers, and the entire procedure is designed to make on Shulam-mith an overpowering impression of the glory of King Solomon. As the procession advances from the open country and draws near the city, several of the people behold and speak as follows.]

A CITIZEN.

6. Who is this, coming up out of the wilderness
like columns of smoke,

6. *Columns of smoke*.—The allusion is not to the stature of Shulam-mith (compare chapter vii, 7), nor to the appearance of the palanquin,

Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense out of
every powder of the merchant?

ANOTHER CITIZEN.

7. Behold! it is his litter,—Solomon's;
Sixty heroes are round about it, from the heroes
of Israel,
8. All of them holding a sword, trained for war,
Each one with his sword on his thigh,
Because of fear in the night-watches.

A THIRD CITIZEN.

9. A palanquin King Solomon made for himself
Out of the trees of Lebanon;

but to the ascending cloud of incense which is conceived as accompanying the procession. The perfumed smoke went upward, and its airy-thin column spread out at the top like a palm tree.

8. *Because of fear.*—This gives a reason for the armed escort. The heroes wore their swords out of considerations of terror, or fear of such attacks as were likely to come in the darkness of the night.

10. Its posts he made of silver,
Its support of gold,
Its riding seat of purple,
Its middle part prepared in love by the
daughters of Jerusalem.

[The procession arrives at the king's palace, from which the royal chamberlain advances, and calls upon all the women to come forth out of the charge of the guard, and go into the palace and look upon Solomon in his glory.]

KING'S OFFICER.

11. Come forth and look, O daughters of Zion,
upon King Solomon,
With the crown wherewith his mother crowned
him,

11. *Crown.*—Reference to some splendid coronet with which Solomon's mother is supposed to have crowned her royal son on the festive occasion of his marriage, either with Pharaoh's daughter or with some other of his wives.

In the day of his nuptials,
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

[*Exeunt, entering the palace.*]

Second Scene. IV, 1—V, 1.

[A room in the palace, where the king is waiting with a number of his companions to meet and greet Shulamith, and win her, if possible, by his royal splendor and words of loving admiration. As she is led forward into his presence, the king first speaks.]

SOLOMON.

I. Behold, thou art fair, my consort; behold, thou
art fair!

Thine eyes are doves from behind thy veil;
Thy hair, how like the flock of goats couched
along mount Gilead!

IV, 1. *Goats couched.*—We are to think of the goats of Gilead, of glossy dark color, and couched down in careless repose along the steep mountain side. A large flock thus reposing would present a most fascinating picture to one looking up at them from below.

2. Thy teeth are like a flock of the shorn which
have gone up from the washing,
All of which are twin-bearing, and a bereaved
one is not among them ;
3. Like a thread of crimson are thy lips,
And thy expressive mouth is comely ;
Like a slice of the pomegranate is thy temple
from behind thy veil ;
4. Like the tower of David is thy neck, builded
for armory,
A thousand shields suspended thereupon, all
shields of the heroes ;

2. *Twin-bearing*.—Allusion to double rows of teeth, uppers and lowers complete, not one wanting.

4. *Tower of David*.—A well-known tower at Jerusalem, connected, probably, in some way with the king's house (compare Nehemiah iii, 25) ; the same, perhaps, as that called the "tower of the flock" in Micah iv, 8, which was nearly synonymous with "the hill of the daughter of Zion." *Builded for armory*.—As the royal tower was adapted to bear the royal shields and other arms, so Shulammith's graceful neck was fitted to wear the wealth of ornamental jewelry.

5. Thy two breasts are like two fawns,
Twins of a gazelle, which feed among the
lilies.

[At this point Shulammith looks away, as if she would fain withdraw, and she gives utterance, aside, to a deep sigh for her mountain home. She has no response for the king's admiration, but shows that her thoughts are far away, and that she would prefer her native hills to the courts of Solomon.]

SHULAMMITH.

6. Until the day breathes cool, and the shadows
flee,
I would, for my part, walk to the mountain of
myrrh,
And to the hill of frankincense.

6. *Shadows flee*.—Compare chapter ii, 17. *Mountain of myrrh . . . hill of frankincense*.—She thus speaks of her native hills, where also her lover dwells. (Compare ii, 8; iv, 16; v, 5, 13; vi, 11; vii, 11, 12; viii, 14.) To her, the heights of Lebanon, and Amanah, and Shenir, and Hermon, are far more attractive than the presence of Solomon in all his glory.

SOLOMON.

7. Thou art all fair, my consort,
And spot there is none in thee.
8. With me away from Lebanon, O spouse,
With me away from Lebanon thou shalt
come ;
Thou shalt look away from the top of Am-
anah,
Away from the top of Shenir and Hermon,
Away from the dens of lions, away from the
mountains of leopards.
9. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister-
spouse ;
Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thy
eyes,
With one little chain of thy necklace.
10. How beautiful are thy loves, my sister-spouse ;

How much better thy loves than wine,
And the fragrance of thine ointments than all
spices!

11. A honey-drop will thy lips distill, O spouse!
Honey and milk are under thy tongue,
And the fragrance of thy garments is like the
fragrance of Lebanon.

[Shulammith again looks away, as if unheeding his words of love and admiration. He pauses, and then again proceeds.]

12. A garden locked is my sister-spouse,
A spring locked, a fountain sealed.
13. Thy offshoots are a paradise of pomegranates,
Together with fruit of precious things.
Cypress flowers, with nards;

13. *Thy offshoots*.—All that proceeds from thee, as impressions made, influence of attractions,—the entire outflow of her general appearance and personality. These are the subject through verses 13-15, and the exotic plants of the king's garden are appropriately employed by him as images of the maiden's loveliness, and remind us of his traditional familiarity with all manner of trees, and plants, and flowers. See 1 Kings iv, 33.

14. Nards and crocus, calamus and cinnamon,
With all trees of frankincense;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices;
15. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,
And flowing streams from Lebanon.

SHULAMMITH.

[Aside, but so as to be heard by the king.]

16. Awake, O north (wind), and come, O south!
Breathe on my garden, let its spices flow.
O let my own love come to his garden,
And let him eat the fruit of his precious
things!

[The king becomes greatly excited by these words of Shulamith, and, impatient and presumptuous, he utters the following, as if to consummate his wishes by his own authority.]

SOLOMON.

- V, 1. I have come to my garden, my sister-spouse;
I have plucked my myrrh with my spice,

I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey,
I have drunk my wine with my milk.
Eat, O comrades!
Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O lovers!

[*Exeunt.*]

THIRD SCENE. V, 2—VIII, 4.

[A room in the palace, in which Shulammith and the women are together. Shulammith relates a troublesome dream, from which she has but recently awaked, and seems to imagine that her lover may have been seeking for her in vain.]

SHULAMMITH.

2. I was asleep, but my heart was awake :
Hark! the voice of my love, knocking!
“Open (said he) for me, my sister, my consort,
my dove, my perfect one;
My head is filled with dew,
My locks with drops of the night.”

3. I have put off my tunic (said I), how shall I
put it on?

I have washed my feet, how shall I soil them?

4. My love sent away his hand from the door-
latch,

And my affections were in tumult over him.

5. Up rose I to open to my love,
And my hands were dropping with myrrh,
And my fingers with myrrh overflowing on the
handles of the bolt.

6. I, myself, opened for my love,
But my love had turned aside, had passed by.
My soul went forth at his word.

6. *My soul went forth at his word.*—The exact meaning is somewhat doubtful. *At his word* is equivalent to *when he spoke*, and the reference is most naturally to the words attributed to him above in verse 2. "When he thus spoke," she seems to say, "my soul forsook me: I was like one who had lost her senses, and acted insanely in not opening at once to my beloved."

I sought him, but I found him not;
I called him, but he did not answer me.

7. They found me—the watchmen who go round
in the city;

They struck me, they wounded me,
They took away my shawl from off me,—
The watchmen of the walls.

8. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
If ye should find my love,
What will ye tell him but that I am sick with
love!

ONE OF THE WOMEN.

9. What is thy love more than any love,
O thou beauty among the women?

8. *I adjure you.*—As three acts of the drama close with an adjuration similar to this (compare ii, 7; iii, 5; and viii, 4), there has been a strong temptation for exegetes to find here also the conclusion of an act. But the question which follows in verse 9 relates so directly to the words of this adjuration as really to forbid such a division at this place.

What is thy love more than any love,
That thou hast thus adjured us?

SHULAMMITH.

10. My love is bright and ruddy, distinguished
from ten thousand;
 11. His head is purest gold; his locks are hill on
hill, dark as the raven;
 12. His eyes are like doves over streams of water,
washing in milk, sitting on fullness;
 13. His cheeks are like a bed of spice, towers of
aromatics;
- His lips are lilies, dropping liquid myrrh;

10-16. What the Apollo Belvedere is in the sculptor's art, this word-picture is in Oriental poetry.

12. *Doves over streams.*—Picture of exquisite delight; their quick movements seem to make them twinkle with joy, and when sitting still, with full breast prominent, they are emblems of comfort.

14. His hands are cylinders of gold, filled in with
the (gems of) Tarshish;
His body is a work of ivory, covered with
sapphires ;
15. His legs are pillars of white marble, set upon
bases of purest gold ;
His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the
cedars ;
16. His palate is manifold sweetness, and he is
all delightful things.
This is my love, and this my friend, O daughters
of Jerusalem !

ONE OF THE WOMEN.

- VI, 1. Whither has gone thy love, O thou beauty
among the women ?
Whither has thy love turned aside, and we
will seek him with thee ?

SHULAMMITH.

2. My love has gone down to his garden, to the
beds of spice,
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.
3. I am my love's, and my love is mine,—
The one who feeds among the lilies.

[Enter KING SOLOMON.]

SOLOMON.

4. Fair art thou, my consort, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem,
Awe-inspiring as the bannered hosts.
5. Turn away thine eyes from before me,
For they have taken me by storm;
Thy hair, how like the flock of goats couched
along mount Gilead!

5. *Hair*.—Compare iv, 1.

6. Thy teeth are like the flock of ewes which have
gone up from the washing,
All of which are twin-bearing, and a bereaved
one is not among them ;
7. Like a slice of the pomegranate is thy temple
from behind thy veil.
8. Sixty are they who are queens, and eighty
concubines,
And virgins without number ;—
One only is my dove, my perfect one ;
9. One only is she of her mother, choice one is
she of her that begat her ;
Daughters look on her and pronounce her
blessed,

8. *Sixty* . . . *eighty*.—Allusion to the numerous wives and concubines of Solomon's harem, which the poet conceives as not having yet reached the numbers mentioned in 1 Kings xi, 3. *Virgins*.—Like those of Esther ii, 3, gathered out of many provinces, and intended in time to be added to the wives and concubines.

Queens and concubines, and they extol her :
10. "Who is this (they say), that looks forth like
the morning,
Beautiful as the white moon, clear as the
warm sun,
Awe-inspiring as the bannered hosts?"

SHULAMMITH.

11. Unto the nut-garden I went down, to see the
greens of the valley,
To see whether the vines were in blossom,
whether the pomegranates bloomed,
12. I know not (how) my soul put me into the
chariots of Amminadib.

[At the mention of her capture, Shulammoth shows great emotion, and turns away as if attempting to withdraw and make her escape from a presence she dislikes and fears. Compare her similar emotion in Act I, Scene 1.]

12. *Amminadib*.—Others translate and read, *my princely people*.

THE WOMEN.

13. Return, return, O thou Shulammitte;
Return, return, and let us gaze at thee!

SHULAMMITH.

What will ye gaze at in the Shulammitte?

THE WOMEN.

Like a dancing of the double-host.
VII, 1. How beautiful thy steps in the sandals, O
princely daughter!
The roundings of thy thighs are like orna-
ments, work of an artist's hands;

13. *Double-host*.—Mahanaim, in allusion to Genesis xxxii, 1, 2. They mean that the dancing of Shulammith would be an angelic sight, like that of Jacob when the angels met him. In accordance with that thought, the women at once proceed to say (or sing as a chorus) how admirable her appearance in the dance would be.

2. Thy waist is the round goblet,—let there not
be wanting the mixed wine!
Thy body a heap of wheat set round with
lilies;
3. Thy two breasts like two fawns, twins of the
gazelle;
4. Thy neck like a tower of ivory;
Thine eyes pools in Heshbon, by the gate of
Bath-rabbim;
Thy nose like the tower of Lebanon, looking
towards Damascus;
5. Thy head upon thee is like Carmel,
And the locks of thy head like purple,—
A king is bound fast in the ringlets!

2. *Goblet . . . wine.*—The one suggests the other, and so the chorus, having mentioned the beautiful waist as resembling the round goblet, add the words which follow in the general sense of, "Let no joy or source of good cheer be wanting." Give thyself up to all the delights which become a form so admirable.

SOLOMON.

6. How fair art thou, and how charming art thou,
O love, in the delightful enjoyments!
7. This, thy stature, is like to a palm-tree,
And thy breasts to clusters.
8. I said, I will go up into the palm-tree,
I will take hold upon its branches,
And let thy breasts, I pray thee, be as clusters
of the vine,
And the fragrance of thy nose as the apples,
9. And thy palate as the goodly wine—

SHULAMMITH [suddenly interrupting].

Going down for my love smoothly,
Making talkative the lips of them that sleep.

6. *Delightful enjoyments.*—Like the dances, songs and merriment of festal occasions; especially the dances, which the women of Solomon's harem would fain behold.

9. *Thy palate as the good wine.*—These words, associated with the mention of the apples and the vine, are exciting reminders of her own

10. I belong to my love, and on me is his desire.
11. O come, my love, and let us away to the
field,
Let us lodge in the hamlets,
12. Let us up early for the vineyards,
Let us see whether the vine has blossomed,
The bud opened, the pomegranates bloomed;
There will I give my loves to thee.
13. The mandrakes have given forth fragrance,

lover. Compare chapters ii, 3, 4; v, 16. They awaken the wild emotion displayed in the last four verses of the First Act (ii, 4-7), and at the mention of the *palate* and *wine of the good* (such is the exact rendering of the Hebrew here), Shulammith suddenly interrupts the king, takes up the sentiment that seems about to fall from his lips, and gives it a reference to her own lover, whom she calls upon to come and lead her away to her home among the vineyards. She will endure the king's advances no longer, and, acting out a measure of the contempt expressed in the last part of viii, 7, she continues her impassioned speech to the close of the act (viii, 4), which ends with the usual adjuration to the daughters of Jerusalem.

10. *On me his desire.*—Man's desire is *on* the woman; her desire *towards* the man. (Genesis iii, 16.)

And over our portals are all precious things;
New things, also old things, my love, have I
kept hidden for thee.

- VIII, 1. O that thou wert as brother to me,
Nursing at the breasts of my mother!
Should I find thee without I might kiss thee,
Also they would not despise me.
2. I would lead thee, I would bring thee to the
house of my mother,
(And there) thou shouldest instruct me.
I would give thee to drink of spiced wine,
Of the juice of my pomegranate.

13. *Precious things*.—Choice fruits preserved and kept in store for rare occasions.

viii, 1. *As brother*.—She would fain have her lover as innocently familiar as an own brother, whom she might openly kiss and fondle without exposure to scorn or contempt.

2. *Bring thee to the house of my mother*.—This longed-for joy has been already in her dreams (iii, 4), and finds happy realization further on (viii, 5).

3. His left hand shall be under my head,
And his right hand shall embrace me.

[Turning towards the women.]

4. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
Why will ye awaken, and why will ye rouse up
The passion of love until it please?

[*Exeunt.*]

3. *His hand.*—Compare ii, 6. By these words she means that both Solomon and the women of his harem shall know that the absent friend, for whom her soul is longing, is the only one whom she will ever permit to embrace her with a lover's rights.

ACT IV. CHAPTER VIII, 5-14.

[A single scene, in a country place, near the home of Shulamith, who now appears restored from her captivity and detention in Solomon's court. She and her lover, arm in arm, are approaching, while her brothers, the same as those referred to in the first scene of the drama, stand near the house, and look in apparent surprise to see them thus drawing near.]

ONE OF THE BROTHERS.

5. Who is this coming up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her lover?
-

5. *Who is this from the wilderness.*—Compare the opening words of the third act, chapter iii, 6. *Leaning upon her lover.*—These words permit us to infer and understand that the lover had sought after Shulamith, and in some way rescued her from the house of Solomon. Now he leads her back in triumph to her home. *I roused thee up.*—The word so translated here is most naturally understood, as in verse 4, of rousing up the passion of love. Here, he says, as he leads her back to her home again, here I first awakened thy love.

THE LOVER [addressing Shulamith].

Under the apple-tree I roused thee up;
Yonder thy mother travailed with thee,
Yonder she travailed, she gave thee birth.

SHULAMMITH.

6. O set me as a signet-ring upon thy heart,
As a signet-ring upon thine arm!
For strong as death is love;
Inexorable as Hell is jealousy;
Its flames are flames of fire,
The flashing flames of JAH.
7. Many waters can not quench the passion of
love,
And rivers can not overwhelm it;

6. JAH.—A shortened poetic form of the name JEHOVAH, the God of Israel.

If a man would give all the substance of his
house for love,
They would utterly despise him.

[The brothers now recognize the situation, and, in the presence of the lovers, proceed to talk coolly of her prospective marriage, insinuating that this courtship is somewhat premature, and may need some interposition on their part. Their language is in keeping with what is said of them in chapter i, 6.

ONE OF THE BROTHERS.

8. A sister is ours,—a little one, and breasts she
has not;
What shall we do for our sister in the day
when she is spoken for?

7. *Give substance for love.*—A fling at the efforts of Solomon and his associates to force true love against its will. Not that he formally offered to buy her love, but his women's words in i, 11; Shulamith's in viii, 11, 12; and such display for effect as in iii, 11, are sufficient to give point and force to this utterance of the maiden.

ANOTHER BROTHER.

9. If she be a wall, we will build thereon a castle
of silver;

But if she be a door, we will fasten over it a
board of cedar.

SHULAMMITH [with indignant emotion].

10. I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers!
Then was I in his eyes as a woman finding
peace.

9. *A wall*.—That is, opposing with firm resistance all efforts of unworthy lovers, and all unhallowed arts of seduction. *A door*.—That is, open and ready to welcome all approaches of such as would profess love for her.

10. *Then was I*.—She refers vividly to the time when Solomon was trying to win her affection. *In his eyes*.—In the eyes of Solomon. She means to say that Solomon looked upon her as one that was seeking for a husband; for such is the meaning of the phrase, *a woman finding peace*, equivalent to “finding rest,” in Ruth i, 9; iii, 1. The idea is that of attaining rest and peace in the house of a husband. The word peace (Hebrew *Shalom*) is perhaps used instead of rest, with a designed allusion to the name of Solomon (Hebrew *Shelomoh*).

11. A vineyard belonged to Solomon in Baal-
hamon,
He gave the vineyard to the keepers,
Each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand
of silver;
12. My vineyard which is for me is before me;
The thousand be for thee, O Solomon,
And hundreds for them that keep its fruit!

THE LOVER.

13. O thou dweller in the gardens,
Companions are listening to thy voice,
Cause me to hear.

11, 12. The purport of these verses is, that all the vineyard-wealth of Solomon was not sufficient to turn her heart from her rustic home and true lover. Solomon is welcome to his thousands of annual revenue; only let her have her own. This self-defense and triumphant vindication of Shulamith stop all further questions, and all about her stand silent, listening to her impassioned voice.

SHULAMMITH [singing].

14. *Flee, O my love, and be for thine own sake
like a gazelle,
Or a fawn of the hinds on the mountains of
spices.*

[*Exeunt.*]

14. This last verse is to be understood as a fragment of song which Shulammoth has been wont to sing for the delight of her lover in former days, and which she knows is specially pleasing to him. Compare the language of ii, 14-17. With this song of the maiden, the drama ends, and the two lovers, arm in arm, pass from the scene, conscious that true love has triumphed. She clings as a signet-ring to his arm, and he knows that her love for him is "strong as death."

Concluding Observations.

THE foregoing analysis and explanation of the Song of Songs has shown, we think beyond question, that the exquisite drama is a poetic tribute to human love. Such a pure, unchangeable affection, which "many waters can not quench," is as heavenly as it is human, and the celebration of it is worthy of a place in the Sacred Volume. It serves the purposes of Holy Scripture as truly as the stories of Joseph and Jephthah and Samson, or the lessons of the books of Ruth and Esther and Job. It exhibits the changeless devotion of two faithful souls whom plighted love unites as "one flesh" for a life-long companionship. Such love deserves the highest admiration. It is immeasurably above the unhallowed sensual life that can talk complacently of "eighty concubines" (vi, 8), and show an inordinate desire to add another to the number. The fidelity of two hearts, inseparably bound together by mutual love, is the divinely ordered foundation of the marriage covenant,

and of holiest family life. Well might an inspired poet sing of such love as something "strong as death," and utterly incapable of being bought and sold.

And if one looks to see some allegorical idea in this Song, or a symbolical portraiture of the

"Love divine, all love excelling,"


he may find in such a love as is here celebrated the best possible representation of the relation existing between Christ and his Church. The holy mystery set forth by the apostle in Ephesians v, 22-33, is illustrated and enhanced in every such example of virtuous fidelity as our exposition of the Song of Songs exhibits. But would it not have been unfortunate for Paul to have named Solomon, and any one of his numerous wives or concubines, as a true type, either of the hallowed marriage relation, or of the loves of Christ and his Church? To me it seems no better than a singular infatuation to imagine that the marriage of the uxorious Solomon to Pharaoh's daughter, or to any other princess, is better adapted to represent the "great mystery concerning Christ and his Church," than the pure, unchanging, and unchangeable love of a manly shepherd and his affianced bride.

It is worthy of note, that in Isaiah's song of the vineyard (Isaiah v, 1-7), in which it is said that "the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel," the delightful friend (*yadhidh*) is called "my love," or "my beloved," the identical Hebrew word (*dodhi*) which is employed throughout the Song of Songs to denote the shepherd-lover, for whom the Shulammitte maiden sighs and sings.

A diligent study of this beautiful song admonishes us that we should not come to the perusal of the Holy Scriptures with *a priori* notions of what they ought or ought not to contain. Nor are we at liberty to assume, on dogmatic grounds, any theory of divine inspiration which interferes with the free investigation of the Biblical writings. Criticism has its rights, and when controlled by sound judgment and sincere desire to know the truth, will lead us to a deeper appreciation as well as a clearer understanding of the Scriptures. The different portions of the Bible, given in divers manners (Hebrews i, 1), constitute a wonderful variety, and they are all "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy iii, 16). But he will surely fall into serious error, who fails to see that this most instructive volume is as truly human as divine.

As a lily among the thorns,
As an apple-tree among the trees of the forest,
So is the changeless devotion of two faithful lovers.
Even Solomon, in all his glory,
Was not arrayed like one of these.

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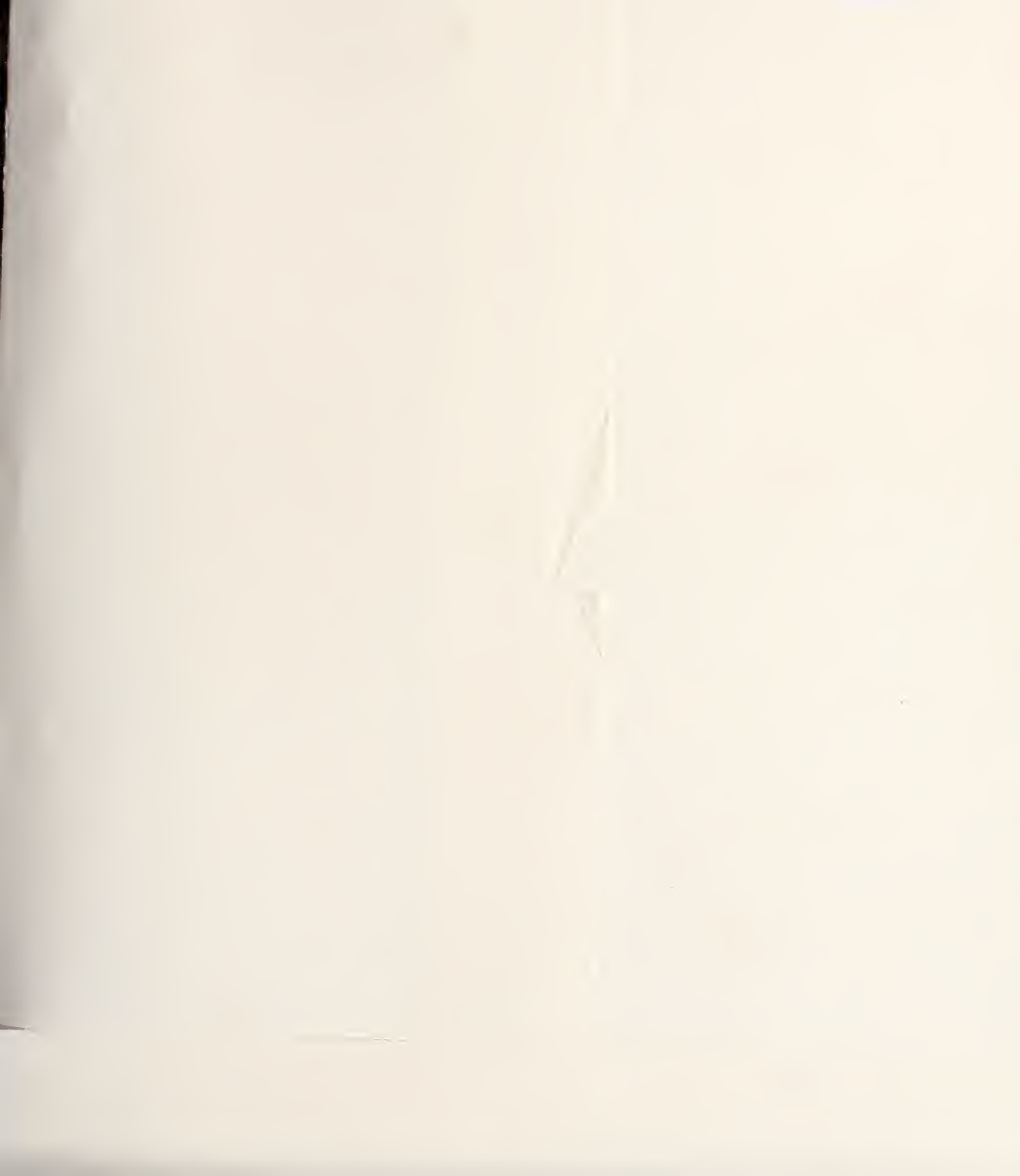
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